F
89
.P9 P91

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
1800

Class

Book

1893. CITY DOCUMENT. [No. 29.

THIRD REPORT

OF THE

RECORD COMMISSIONERS

RELATIVE TO THE

EARLY TOWN RECORDS.

[PRESENTED DECEMBER 4, 1893.]

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS,
1898
CITY OF WASHINGTON.

J. A. & R. A. REID, CITY PRINTERS,
Dyer and Pine Streets.
1893.

2363
F81
.P[illegible]

REPORT.

To the Honorable the City Council of the City of Providence:

Gentlemen:—The Record Commissioners herewith submit the fourth of the printed volumes of the Early Records of the Town of Providence, it being a continuation of the records contained in the Third Book Town of Providence, A and B, otherwise called "The Book with Brass Clasps."

In this book the records of town meetings and of the town council terminate and an hiatus of seventeen years occurs in the records of such meetings in the immediate custody of the city.

Through the instrumentality of Charles E. Paine, Esq., for many years City Engineer, the attention of the Commissioners has been directed to two resolutions of the City Council, which originated in the Board of Aldermen.

As originally introduced they passed the Aldermen February 10, 1845, and were as follows:

"Resolved, That the Mayor be requested cause the deed of Cananicus and Miantinomo to Roger Williams, dated 24th of 1st mo. 2 year of our plantation; the deed of Roger Williams to the first settlers, dated the 8th of the 8 month, 1638; the deed of Roger Williams to the first settlers, dated 20th of December, 1661; and the charter to the Town of Providence, dated March, 1648, to be framed under or between glass, and hung up in the City Clerk's office.

Resolved, That the Mayor be requested cause the residue of the old papers in the City Clerk's office that have usually been kept in bags, with such other loose ones as are

about his office and of no present use or value to the city, to be transferred to the Rhode Island Historical Society, upon the Society's giving a receipt and promising to return such papers as shall be specified in it on request."

When these resolutions reached the Common Council, they were referred to the Committee on City Property, which committee subsequently submitted the following report:

"To the Honorable City Council of the City of Providence:

The undersigned Committee on City Property, to whom was referred certain resolutions from the Board of Aldermen, the first resolution respecting the old Indian Deeds to Roger Williams, the second relating to the loose papers in the City Clerk's office, would respectfully report that they have examined the said deeds and find them in a good state of preservation, considering their great age. It is, therefore, their opinion that it is inexpedient for the Council to concur in the first resolution, as they doubt the propriety of putting the deeds under glass to be hung in the City Clerk's office, as they fear the effect of the light would be to fade the ink entirely out; they, therefore, recommend that the City Clerk be directed to procure a box to put the said deeds in, and to be kept in the same form that they now are, and think they would be much better preserved than in the manner proposed by the resolution. In regard to the second resolution, they would recommend that the Council concur, and that the loose papers in the Clerk's office be delivered to the Historical Society as there provided.

James T. Rhodes,
Phinneas Potter,
Daniel E. Carpenter."

On March 10, 1845, the Common Council concurred with the Board of Aldermen with the following amendments, viz: striking out the words "framed under or between glass and hung up in the City Clerk's office" in the first resolution, and inserting in lieu thereof the words "placed in a suitable box for their better preservation."

Some time between the tenth day of May, 1845, and the twenty-first day of July, 1846, the exact date cannot now be ascertained, the papers referred to were deposited with the Historical Society; and at a meeting of the society on the twenty-first day of July, 1846, the Hon. Albert G. Greene, in the words of the Society's resolution, "was appointed to collate and arrange the manuscripts deposited in the Northern Library during the past year, by vote of the City Council of Providence, with authority to cause as many blank books to be made as he may deem requisite for the reception and preservation of said manuscripts, and to draw upon the treasurer for the expense of such books."

It will be observed that no list or particular description of the papers is given, nor do the records of the Society anywhere show the number or the nature of the manuscripts thus deposited. No further mention is made on the records of the society, relative to this deposit, other than that included in a list of the additions to the Northern District Cabinet for the year extending from July, 1845, to July, 1846, wherein it is stated that there are: "four bags of documents on deposit, to be surrendered when called for; a receipt having been given for the same to the City Clerk by the cabinet keeper." A careful examination of the city's files fails to disclose this receipt, but it was probably no more in detail than the entry made on the records of the Society.

In the course of their official investigations, the Commissioners have had occasion from time to time to refer to the great number of papers and documents relating to the

proceedings of the town which were included among the manuscript collections of the Rhode Island Historical Society, and which gave unmistakable evidence of having been at one time the property of the town.

This is now satisfactorily explained, and the Commissioners think it proper that the attention of the City Council should be called to the fact so that these papers and documents, no less than the others of like character and description belonging to the city, may be placed in suitable form for preservation, in accordance with the modern methods which have been devised for preserving old manuscripts.

The Rhode Island Historical Society has long been recognized as a proper depository for valuable manuscripts and documents by State, City and individuals; indeed, the General Assembly of Rhode Island makes an annual appropriation for caring for its property there deposited, and it has recently, in recognition of the service rendered by the society in this respect, seen fit to increase the amount of that appropriation.

For nearly half a century this honored old society has cared for the papers of the city there deposited, not only without remuneration, but even at some expense to itself; and it is fortunate that these documents were placed in so secure a depository, for, had they not received such fostering guardianship, it is not unlikely that, among the vicissitudes to which they would have been exposed, many of them now of inestimable value to the municipality would have been lost or destroyed.

The authority granted the Record Commissioners to collect, print and preserve the early records of Providence, does not restrict them to any particular records, so long as they are the records of the town of Providence; but before taking any steps toward exercising any authority over the records in the custody of the Historical Society, or towards putting them in order, the Commissioners feel that the City Council

should be informed of this deposit and its consent should be obtained.

The papers in the custody of the Historical Society, under the resolution of the City Council hereinbefore referred to, are none the less the property of the city than they would be if they had not been placed in such custody.

The work on the "Providence Town Papers" has so far progressed that an opportunity is now presented for the Commissioners to give these papers proper attention without interfering with the plans which they have outlined for caring for the documents now in their immediate custody.

All of the papers in the city's possession, outside of the Historical Society, previous to the year 1800, that have come to the knowledge of the Commissioners have been brought together, arranged, repaired and mounted in books, and an index to all of them up to and including the year 1790 has been nearly completed.

In view of the fact that a considerable portion of the records contained among the papers of the Rhode Island Historical Society will fill up the break which has previously been referred to, viz: the years 1675 to 1692, it would be wise if attention could be given to these records and a similar method pursued with them as with the other papers of the city, so that the documentary possessions of the city previous to the year 1800, wherever located, would be as complete as it is possible to make them.

Some years ago the Historical Society had these papers of the city inserted in scrap books along with other miscellaneous manuscripts of its own, and any attempt to put the city's papers in proper order will require that certain of the Society's possessions be disarranged.

The care which this Society has given to this property of the city during these many years would in justice seem to demand that the city, in caring for its own documents, should see that the Society's documents do not suffer by any re-arrangement, and that they are left in proper order.

To this end the Commissioners recommend that, in the prosecution of their work, they may be authorized to apply a part of the last appropriation for their use, and, therefore, respectfully ask for the passage of the accompanying resolution.

Horatio Rogers,
G. M. Carpenter,
Edward Field,
Record Commissioners.

Providence, R. I., December 4, 1893.

No. 715. Resolution Directing the Record Commissioners to Cause Certain Old Documents Deposited in the R. I. Historical Society to be Repaired.

[Approved December 8, 1893.]

Resolved, That the record commissioners be and they are hereby directed to cause the old papers and documents deposited in the Rhode Island Historical Society, by resolution of the City Council passed March 10, 1845, to be suitably repaired, classified, inserted in books, and indexed; and to also cause such manuscripts belonging to said society as may be disarranged by such repairing and classifying, to be arranged satisfactory to said society.

1893. CITY DOCUMENT. [No. 29.

THIRD REPORT

OF THE

RECORD COMMISSIONERS

RELATIVE TO THE

EARLY TOWN RECORDS.

[PRESENTED DECEMBER 4, 1893.]

J. A. & R. A. REID, CITY PRINTERS,
Dyer and Pine Streets.
1893.

72

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 014 110 211 4